

The Dipstick



“The Newsletter of the Tidewater MG Classics Car Club”

www.mg.org

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Dedicated To Preserving The Marque Since 1973

April 2009

MARQUE TIME

Please accept my apologies for missing the March meeting. I was in the throes of a particularly nasty virus, which the doctor swore was NOT the flu. (It felt ten times worse than anything I've experienced in the past, so I decided to keep my germs away from TMGC. After two weeks, I'm on the mend and ready to get back out into the garage.) I understand everyone had a great time and that Bill Olcheski did a standup job running the meeting. Thanks again to Andy and Cynthia for hosting!

I've recently had the pleasure of two "field visits" with club members. A few weeks ago I was the lucky recipient of an invitation from Walt Westhoff to take a look at his 1959 MGA project. Walt has the car completely disassembled while he meticulously performs a frame off restoration. It was truly an educational experience for me – thanks Walt! (And don't forget that we're all looking forward to progress reports as the car comes back together!)

For my other excursion, I accompanied Vince Groover and Bill Yoshida on a Saturday morning visit to new member Mike Lalli's place. Mike was looking for some assistance with the brake lights and the carbs on his recently acquired 1978 B. This car had been set up with twin SUs some years ago and they were in need of attention. I am happy to report that Mike's car is now back on the road with functional brake lights and balanced carbs. Thank you Vince and Bill for stepping up to assist our 100th member!

We're certainly lucky to have so much technical expertise resident in TMGC. The next opportunity to tap this storehouse of knowledge will be the Spring Tech Session at Linse's Garage on April 19th. See you there!

Cheers, Mark Davidoski

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Check www.mg.org for the latest info!

- Apr. 7 (Tue) Meeting hosted by Ron Struewing & Anita Edwards-Struewing
- Apr. 12 Dipstick Deadline
- Apr. 18 Brits in the Delaware - Kintersville, PA
Contact Tony Hess - 610-346-9026 or aghbop@aol.com
- Apr. 19 (Sun) Spring Tech Session hosted by Frank & Debbie Linse
- Apr. 24-26 Winery Tour
- May. 3 (Sun) [WBCC Car Show](#), Williamsburg Winery, Williamsburg, VA
- May. 6 (Wed) Meeting hosted by Jim & Betty Villers
- Jun. 2 (Tue) Meeting hosted by Bill & Issie Yoshida
- Jun. ? (Sun) [TTR Brits on the Bay](#) Car Show, Virginia Beach, VA
- Jun. 24-28 MG 2009 Breckenridge, CO
www.mg2009.com
(April 15th cut-off for registration discount)
- Jun. 24-28 [MG 2009](#) Breckenridge, CO
- Jul. 1 (Wed) Meeting hosted by Bill & Renee Olcheski
- Jul. 14-18 NAMGAR [GT-34](#), Hot Springs, AR
- Aug. 4 (Tue) Meeting hosted by Tad & Karen Carter
- Sep. 2 (Wed) Meeting hosted by Marilyn & Roy Wiley

Upcoming Activities (continued)

- Oct. 06 (Tue) Meeting hosted by Chuck & Becky Hassler
- Oct. 30 Hilton Head / Savannah Historics (Track Event) www.hhiconcours.com
- Oct. 31 Hilton Head / Savannah Car Club Jamboree www.hhiconcours.com
- Nov. 1 Hilton Head Concours d'Elegance www.hhiconcours.com



MARCH MINUTES

Michele Peters

We began our March meeting at 8:04pm on March 4th at Andy Wallach and Cynthia Faschini's lovely and spacious home in Norfolk on the river, with a rather large turn-out, including some members who rarely grace us with their presence – you know who you are...and THANKS, DUDES! (Yeah, yeah, I know, I've been hangin' round my teenagers too long!). El Presidente was under-the-weather (hope you feel better real soon, Mark!) so El Vice-Presidente ran the show. Gracias, Dude!

New Members and Guests: Hailing all the way from Prince Edward Island (how many of you know where that is...no, really?) were guests John and Carol Newman, family to Mike and Jennifer Ash. You are very welcome! In addition, James joined us (yes, I realize I didn't add James' last name...'cuz I can't read my own handwriting, okay?!) who lives in Virginia Beach and has two MGBs; a 1980 and a 1978 model, restored. Hey, we're a good group, James, even if we can't remember your name! (Editor note: Check the Membership report in your May newsletter and you can find out James' last name—we only give you bits and pieces that you have to piece together!)

Vice-President: Doing duty as the Prez, so nothing from *this* end.

Treasurer: Jim V. reported that we had about \$230 less than last month, but we are still well in the black.

Activities: Tad Carter reminded everyone about some of the events coming soon. On April 26th is the Britain on the Green and from May 30th to June 7th is the British car week. He said more info can be found in the April newsletter and on the website.

History: Susan reported that “We have his-

tory” again. Sue – you need to come up with another line... She hasn't found the albums, but is sure they are somewhere under one of the piles of discarded flooring or in a box in the back corner of one of the newly constructed rooms of their house...

Newsletter: Ron Struewing thanked everyone for their continued support. He also asked that those with technical experience consider writing articles or collaborating on an article. He also mentioned that it might be helpful for the others if one of our members who is restoring their car, submits an article with photographs about his or her project. It does not have to fit in one issue but could be a series spanning a few issues

Membership: Bill Yoshida was radiant. Actually, he really was simply “glowing.” His goal of 100 members has finally been achieved at this writing and he was proud, oh so proud! Good for you, Bill! Go get 'em, buddy! As a matter of fact, however, I don't know if we *actually* have 100, or if Bill told me he is “claiming” Bob Stein, a past member who recently acquired a 1949 TC. This would mean that Bill's happiness is really only the product of a twisted and pathetic but very active imagination....Bill, oh, Bill.....

Technical: Mark Childers spoke a little about homemade tools, but since he was too far away from me from me to hear him, I have no report....Are you complaining?

Old Business: None

New Business: Andy, Cynthia and the VP were gabbing about something having to do with new by-laws and committees and “Ts” but, since I didn't hear much of it, there is no report!

Marque Time: PBG (Pittsburgh Plate Glass) will put in a windshield in a “B” for \$275 plus tax (Moss Motors wants \$500). They are located in Kitty Hawk, NC.

Mike needed an HS-4 carb fix; Chuck fixed it (needle wouldn't seat so it wouldn't shut off) after Vince diagnosed it – see, it DOES take a village...

Betty Davis bought the B recently for sale by the minister and notes the body really WAS bad, but happily, she is using it for parts.

Raffle and Regalia: An MG carb tune-up kit, MGOC Feb issue, license plate holder, symphony tickets, 3 T-shirts, a “35 years of Dipstick” CD, and first-in-line prizes were raffled off to the delight of the winners and the dismay of the losers (and yes, except for my one or two “moments in the sun,” I remain winless!).

We adjourned at 8:37 in a nearly record 33-minutes, with a last offer by Andy to allow any and all to work on his cars for nothing. I do note a couple of real holes in this reporter's reporting, but since I have no apologies to make, you probably know what my response would be to such an ungrateful complaint....sue me!

Car Sick?

Bring it to the **Tech Session:**



Sunday, April 19th starting at 10am

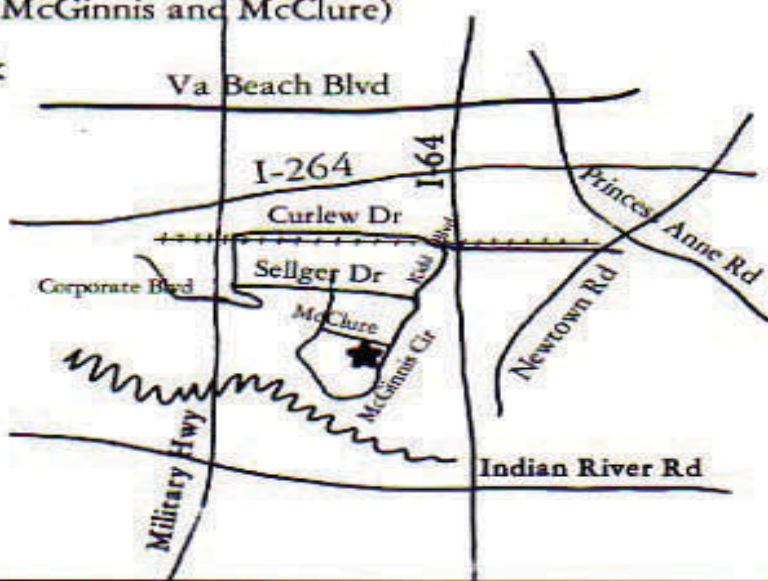
Frank & Deb Linse's garage

301 E. McGinnis Circle

(corner of McGinnis and McClure)

Norfolk

461-7783



Membership and New Members

Bill Yoshida

There have been two members joining the club since last month's newsletter went out. That brings the membership count to 100! One is a previous member and one is a first-time owner of an MGB. Bob Stein (welcome back) sent his membership in prior to the February meeting and I was able to turn over his dues check to Jim Villers at the meeting. Bob recently purchased a 1949 MG TC (TC5308). He has wanted to own a TC for a long time and now he finally does. He spent a lot of time at last meeting talking to Andy. Are they plotting to exclude all the MGA and MGB owners from the club; not a chance!

Also at the meeting I reported that Mike Lalli had called to let me know he did purchase an MG; and I made claim that there was one more "check in the mail" from an anticipated new member. I was wrong; the membership form came with cash from Mike Lalli (welcome to the club and MG ownership). Both Bob and Mike have authorized me to put their addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses in the Newsletter...so... for current members please capture the

information in your copy of the 2009 TMGC Directory to keep it up-to-date.

Here is the data on our newest members:

Robert A. Stein (Bob)
7500 Pennington Rd.
Norfolk, VA 23505
Ph# (757) 588-6200
1949 MG TC

E-mail: posti@aol.com

Michael & Carol Lalli
205 Militia Ct.
Yorktown, VA 23693
Ph# (757) 766-1445
1978 MGB

E-mail: lollipop@cox.net

HAPPY EASTER!

Great Day in Hickory

by Stephen Daniel
photographs by Susan Bond

Well, Saturday March the 7th proved to be a magnificent meet for the TRAACA Show and Swap – Meet at the Hickory Ruritan Club in Chesapeake. This year no one needed a life jacket or umbrella at the show, as was needed last year. Upon arrival I was pointed to a place of honor to park my B, next to the driveway on the front row!! After parking the car I made my way inside and located the club's table in our usual location. Sue Bond was busy setting up the laptop with a slide show that visitors could see. Also, there were applications beside the laptop and a copy of the Dipstick for potential members to glance at. Sue had also brought some parts along that had been given to her and Terry--all proceeds from the sale of these items went to the Club. Yeah Sue !!



Across the aisle Terry was selling Model T-related items. Several vendors were present outside and anything could be had, from a go-kart to signs for old gas stations, etc. I even located a 1960 "City of South" Norfolk License Plate (needs some work). - Throughout the day, several members stopped by. These included Jack Pavlidis, Mark and Debbie Childers, Harry Watson, All and Laurel Swenson, Bob Stein, Frank Worrell, Mack Hiby (a former member), Sue and Terry Bond and me. While we were outside checking out what the vendors had for sale, Frank Worrell and I talked about how neat and nifty the go-kart would look with an MGB body on it - only thing to decide is whether to use a chrome or rubber bumper model. Of course, Sue would probably want an MGB-GT body on it, right Sue? At least three people picked up applications for the club. If they join, that will make Bill happy because - membership will then be over 100. On a scale of 1 to 10 this event was a solid



9 +++++. I know, for me as well as some other club members, this is considered the kick-off for the show and driving season so let's all hope that this fine weekend is a good omen for what is to come this - spring and summer.



To those who came, thanks for all the help and to those who could not make it, you missed a great time and event. Above all, remember the motto "Safety Fast". See you at the next event.



Link of the Month

submitted by Susan Bond

Do you have a vintage automobile with an original radio but would like to hear something else like FM , CD, MP3/iPod®, tape players, or Sirius-XM satellite radio? Don't despair! The RediRad™ could get you on your way. It will interface you portable device to your AM radio without any modifications.

www.rediscoveradio.com

Shock Refurbishing

by Mark Childers

A few years ago, I tuned a beater B and took it out for a quick spin--or about as close as I wanted to get to a "spin" in an LBC that doesn't belong to me. The shocks were doing nothing to contain a propensity to "jounce" even over relatively flat centerline reflectors, and made for a vehicle on the verge of being unsafe at any speed.

Springs affect how any vehicle feels, handles and steers, but shocks have the lead role, especially in high-milers with soft springs held up by mushy bushings. Shocks serve the purpose of damping huge forces generated by a fifty-pound spinning mass trying to bounce off of every irregularity in the road. Good shocks can make up for worn out springs a whole lot better than the other way 'round.

Armstrong makes a great, long lasting, and semi-adjustable product. The only downside that while Mustang owners can replace an eighty-dollar set of Monroe tubes every 10,000 miles or so in under an hour, MG owners are often frustrated by frozen upper fulcrums in the front and spinning links out back. It's those very years of faithful service rewarded with benign neglect (*by previous owners...*) that generate the unwarranted bad rep that's often heaped on knee action shocks and king pin suspension.

The easiest way to check for bad shocks is to "bounce" each corner. Push down hard and let it go. An MGB with good shocks shouldn't bounce much at all after rebounding. If you find a bad shock, it's probably time to look a little deeper, as weak shocks accelerate wear in kingpins and suspension bushings front and rear. But that's another article.... My experience has been that filling shocks with a syringe full of jack oil doesn't do much more than waste time and energy. Air can't be bled in situ from the pistons or valve, so pony up some time and a few bucks and do it right.

A few tips before starting. For the fronts pre-order a pair of spare upper fulcrum bolts/nuts and bushes. If you have them on hand, the old ones will come out as easy as pie. If they're living in a warehouse in Kansas, you can be sure of mushroomed threads and frozen bushes. At \$53.00 a pair, new links for the rears are relatively pricey, and hard to find used. Since rear shocks are very easy to remove and reinstall, if the link bushes are worn, but the nuts won't undo from the spring bracket without spending more time than you have available in one session, you can still refresh the shocks and replace the links at a later date.

By the way, some denatured alcohol, two quarts of 30 wt *non-detergent* engine oil and a piece of gasket material are the main consumables for this pro-

ject. A #2 Pozidrive bit will undo the reservoir screws without tearing them up. It's a must-have item in every LBC toolbox. From Vermont American, available at most big boxes and mom and pop hardware stores. You may need a quart bottle of 30-wt motorcycle fork oil of the "seal conditioning" variety, but don't run out and spend another ten bucks unless it becomes necessary.



It doesn't take much in the way of materials to service shocks. A quart of 30wt non detergent oil is also required.

Fronts: Position a floor jack under a spring pan and jack until the wheel clears the ground. Position a short jack stand under the "frame rail" just aft of the firewall for safety, but leave the jack in place and remove the wheel. Wire brush the visible nuts on the shock. Pull the cotter pin on the fulcrum, and loosen the 9/16" castellated nut a couple turns. If it's not seized, you should be able to GENTLY tap squarely on the threaded end and see some movement. If not, don't despair. Find a good 3/8x24 (fine thread) standard hex nut, spin it on, leaving a 1/8" gap, and try tapping on the nut - a little harder, but not so hard as to mushroom the nut into the threads. A shot of PB Blaster may help.

Whether it comes off or not, your next step will be to loosen and remove the bolt holding the shock arm to the body of the shock--the horizontal nut/bolt in the middle holding the shock arms together. Next the four shock retaining bolts (all 9/16"). Once the hardware is off, the shock can be moved around, and the removable arm can be levered off of the shock using a big screwdriver



Remove screws from lid

(sometimes it helps to wedge a screwdriver blade into the split in the arm and open it up some. With the arm free from the shock, you can now concentrate on one part at a time. The “free” arm will generally come loose from the upper fulcrum with a little friendly persuasion. Once off, you will be faced with getting the bolt out of the rubber bushes, and the bushes out of the head of the kingpin to free the shock for servicing.

Don’t call in Thor’s hammer until you’ve tried a propane torch set to low heat to help soften/melt the rubber bushing that has likely become a permanent part of the bolt and kingpin. I always wrap an icy wet rag around the top of the fixed portion of the kingpin just in case. A sawzall, pneumatic or electric cut-off wheel can come in handy, just don’t gnaw into the top of the kingpin or the shock arms. I’ve never had to replace a shock arm or a king pin simply due to frozen bushes, but be prepared to spend an hour or more on a difficult extraction.

Rear shocks can present a slightly different challenge. Before starting, buy or borrow a pair of “alligator jaw” vise lock pliers. If the ball & socket bolt holding the shock link to the spring perch spins during removal, you can position the pliers in such a way as to lock it down. Failing that, the best course is to remove the 4 spring perch nuts from the U-bolts (**SAFETY:** when removing spring perches, jackstands must *NOT* be positioned under the axle tubes) For quickest, easiest removal and reinstallation of the spring perch nuts, clean the exposed threads on the u-bolts with a wire brush, heat the nuts with your bunsen, and wick a bit of candle wax or PB Blaster into the threads before breaking the torque. Once undone, remove shock, link and shock bracket in one piece and work in the relative comfort on a bench.

A bit of labor later, and you’ll have four nasty shocks in hand. While a spotless, glass beaded and clear-coated block of aluminum is pretty and all that, unless you have a trailer queen, there’s little reason to dress them up for the prom. However, you must clean off any accumulated dirt that can fall into the reservoir and contaminate your hard work. While the shaft bushings are tough, and the exterior seals rarely “blow out” if the area around the arm/s are wet and nasty, the seal is probably leaking, but the conditioning fork oil mentioned earlier may fix that right up, or at least add a couple more years of service.

If the shock has zero resistance to movement, you may need a replacement – used or rebuilt (Vince/ Peter Caldwell of Worldwide Parts, etc). But don’t despair quite yet. With a good rinse and service, the results can be nothing short of amazing. Front and rear cleaning/service procedures are essentially identical.

Once all debris is cleaned off, set the shock in a pan and remove all the cover screws. Tap the lid with a mallet until it breaks free. If you need to use a vise, be

very careful not to warp the aluminum housing. It only needs to keep from rotating. Loosen and remove the valve and drain the stinky blackened oil.



Gently tap lid off, careful not to tear cork gasket



Drain the goop from the reservoir and wipe off as much surface as possible

Flush the reservoir with 2-3 ounces of 30-wt *non-detergent* engine oil a couple times and turn it over to drain. A sheet of white paper will provide a backdrop to see any major contaminants. Generally, fly-specks won’t affect performance – so once the gross stuff is gone, it’s good to go. Clean the valve in denatured alcohol and wipe some oil on the rubber seal.

One drawback to the Armstrong shock is that you really can’t play with the valving while the shock is installed because it’s virtually impossible to bleed all the air out of the system (it’s essentially a hydraulic jack with a built in leak). If the shocks show any degree of resistance, then 30-wt engine oil should work just fine. If you plan on driving the pants off your car, then spring for the anti-foaming properties of 30-wt anti-foaming fork oil. After a test drive, if you don’t like the feel (too stiff or much too soft) at least it’s now not such a big deal to remove the shocks for a quick



Remove valve and drain chamber

drain and refill with a different viscosity oil. If the cover gasket broke during disassembly, cut out a new one using the lid as a template. I've had no luck using a bead of silicone as it tends to squib out when the lid is torqued down.



Flush reservoir, fill with oil of choice and replace lid. Top off through the filler bolt before installing

A good shock will move through the entire range of travel with significant resistance. I used a linear fish scale on a pair of good rear shocks – one with shock oil had 8 pounds of steady pull end to end, and the other, with 30wt engine oil had just over 10 pounds (a 25% “upgrade?”). From experience, 20-wt non-detergent engine oil delivers about the same resistance as the original shock oil.

Air passing through the pistons and valve presents as a grinding sensation that can be eerily similar to metal on metal. Easiest way I've found to bleed all the air out is to slowly fill the reservoir with a big syringe until it's topped off, then with the body gently clamped in a towel-lined vise, add oil thru the valve hole while moving the arm a little at a time.



Fill, bleed, and reinstall valve. Center the lever arm to allow oil to fill valve chamber

Once the valve hole is filled, screw the valve in place (excess will overflow). Flip the reservoir to the top, remove the filler bolt and drain just enough to leave a 1/8” air pocket. With the shock in it's mounted position, work the arm a dozen times through full range until it's smooth, even and firm in the range of the “working zone”. If you have a problem getting there, call somebody for a second opinion before spending money on what still may be a perfectly usable shock. Lastly clean it up. If you use Brake-kleen, be careful not to soak the seal surrounding the lever-arm shaft as it can over-soften the rubber and lead to leaks. Denatured alcohol or a hot water and Dawn scrub will make installation a bit less slippery. And, as in all LBC ventures, installation is the reverse of removal, less a good deal of the cussing and moaning. Don't forget to note your driving impressions in various circumstances so that you will have something to share at the next tyre-



Officers and Committees

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What Went Wrong?

by Geoff Wheatley

June 2007

Ed. Note: This is Part Two in a Two-Part series.

However, despite the connections that Morris may have had (to the British government), Leonard, Lord of the Austin group, became CEO at the same time the government increased its financial stake in the new Corporation to 20% of the stock. Morris was already in semi-retirement so this choice was no great burden to either him or his fellow Directors who had been waiting for the day that Morris would step down. A great leader but not one to share power! As a Morris Director once said, "The best meeting to have with the Boss is not to turn up". With a Morris man in the number two spot it was expected that Leonard Lord would start to integrate the two empires to cut costs and bring the best of the best together. Nothing could have been further from the truth! He refused to integrate any part of the new corporation, Austin workers would remain Austin and Morris workers Morris. No combination of design or development, no cooperative research, no exchange of management skills, in short nothing to make the two great corporations stronger and more productive. Each division stood or fell on its own merit. This meant that the overhead costs remained much the same, the labor force was over-staffed with multiplication at all levels of management. Dealerships were still divided into Morris and Austin with no encouragement to cut costs and combine brand names. Within two years it was obvious that this merger was not working, costs increased, production fell and labor disputes increased as the workers from both sides tried to outdo each other on wage negotiations. The government had changed and a new conservative attitude was the order of the day. The 20% investment in B.M.C. would be increased to 25% if Lord implemented a few economic cuts and got the corporation back into the black. Remember we are talking about many millions of dollars when a government increases its investment with taxpayer's money. Lord wanted a new production plant and the government wanted to reduce the unemployment in the north of England so it all made sense. To them anyway!

To the workers based in the thriving midlands of Britain especially at Coventry, the home of British Motor production, (like Detroit is in the USA), this investment did not make much sense especially when Lord decided under government direction that the Austin range of engines were the only power units to be used throughout BMC. At Morris Cowley the Mini was ready to go into production with its unique cross power engine, and at Abingdon the MGA was already an export winner. Change engines? What nonsense!

A boardroom rift erupted which led to a head to head showdown between Lord and his board. B.M.C almost collapsed but once again the government stepped in increasing its interest by another five percent and increasing its presence on the board. A sad day for the British Motor industry that was now virtually a semi-nationalized industry with all the problems of a bureaucracy and none of the benefits associated with private corporate mergers. By the early 1960s the number of British Motor Manufacturers had reduced dramatically. Bristol and AC had gone in company with Singer, Standard, Allard, and Armstrong Sidney. The Rootes Group (Hillman, Sunbeam etc.) another government amalgamation were in serious trouble and was eventually sold by the government to an American motor company for a token ten dollars on the understanding that they would maintain production for an agreed ten years after purchase. In reality the end result of this give away was asset stripping with nothing left of the once prosperous Rootes Group in two short years. About eight thousand workers lost their jobs.

Mr. DeLorean did much the same thing twenty years later when Prime Minister Thatcher, the iron lady, was taken in by DeLorean and sixty five million of the British taxpayers money was wasted on a production factory in Northern Ireland. .

The world famous "Mini" hit the market in late 1959 first as the Morris Mini then as the Austin Mini. Apart from the badge on the front they were identical cars. The first year was not a success as the early cars had a tendency to stop in wet weather. After several months of study it was found that the front skirt was designed the wrong way round which allowed rain-water to enter the low front grill and drown the Lucas electrics.

A modification to this area solved the problem and by 1960 several Minis had won various international events throughout Europe. One such car endured the East African three-week rally and won in its class against the best that Europe and the US could produce. Another drove across Australia east to west, then just to show how good these cars were did the north to south route. The movie "The Italian Job" completed the marketing activity for the Mini when four production cars leaped the roofs of Milan and navigated the sewers to complete a gold robbery. I remember leaving the movie house after seeing that film and going off the next day to buy my first but not last Mini.

The policy of putting different badges on the same car became the progressive marketing policy of the British motor manufacturers. The idea was simple, stick a few bits of extra chrome on the outside and a polished plastic wood dash on the interior and you could take the standard Morris, or Austin family car and turn it into an up market Riley or Wolsey which would sell for more money. The basic car was exactly

the same but these extra trinkets moved it into a higher price range. Strange as it may seem the British public went along with this policy, in fact it was possible to buy the extra adornments yourself and spruce up the family sedan for a fraction of the dealer's price. Even the popular Mini went through this adornment with a Mini De Lux at about one thousand dollars more. The actual changes were a few extra bits of chrome in the front and a couple of extra gauges inside displayed in a plastic frame. This type of activity did not involve any major investment in new production techniques or even a progressive design operation, the quick buck was the order of the day with quality control virtually forgotten even for such cars as Jaguar who managed to lose their hold on the export market by the early 1970s.

One has to ask what Detroit was doing during the heyday of the British sports car? The Corvette was the only serious challenge to the British dominance and that was never a mass market vehicle. Ford did produce the famous Mustang that continues to hold its own against any foreign import but that was it. Had there been a serious challenge from the American side both the quality and service facilities for such cars as the MG, Triumph and Mini would have improved. By 1970 the market for most British vehicles in the US had disappeared except for the sports vehicles. The most successful of these, despite the lack of modern design was the MGB a typical British rust bucket with a power unit that was antique compared with the Japanese imports. However, it sold 620,000 vehicles in the USA during its long life span of eighteen years.

Second in line was the Triumph which was, on paper, out of the same stable through the creation of the British Motor Corporation but in reality this was never true. As previously mentioned the CEO Leonard Lord, did not allow any part of the corporation to work together or share development, in short each production unit stood or fell on its own performance which led to yet another problem that today seems almost beyond belief.

BMC management felt that they could negotiate different pay scales for different factories despite the fact that the unions were national and negotiated on a national basis. If you paid a worker \$5 an hour to fit wheels, that rate of reward should be universal throughout the BMC operation. Management refused to accept this principle and the end result was serious labor disputes that led to strikes and walkouts. The hotbed of such activity was at the Triumph operation in the north. There was hardly a month without some form of work stoppage and/or walkout.

This situation slowly spread throughout the whole BMC operation and by 1961 the corporation was in serious financial trouble with the government pushing for a solution. Triumph went on the selling block to be purchased by British Leyland, Britain's largest

producer of trucks and buses. No one believed that this would succeed but through good management, some real capital investment and a lot of pruning by 1963 Leyland Triumph reported a profit. Back at the ranch the British Motor Corporation continued its old policy of independent achievement but did concentrate all sports car production at the MG Abingdon factory. This may sound advantageous but in reality this factory was little more than an assembly plant with most of the components being made throughout the UK. The car bodies were made at Press Steel in Oxford, the engines and gearbox were made at the Morris/Austin Engine works, the electrical components made in Birmingham by Lucas and so on. Every component was fitted by hand but to be fair it should be noted that air driven tools were installed in the 1960s! Twenty years had passed since the first British cars hit the American shores yet the dealerships were still scattered and supplies of spare parts usually way behind demand. By 1970 it was obvious that some form of action was needed if the British Motor industry was to survive and by 1971 BMC had bit the dust and British Leyland became the proud owner of MG, Morris, Austin, Triumph and Jaguar. British Leyland was now the major vehicle producer in the UK had and of course started to lose money. Various cuts were made, workers laid off and industrial disputes increased. Once again the government stepped in with more cash remembering that unemployed workers still vote! The British taxpayer now owned about 40% of the British motor industry although the dividend return was not that exciting as production fell and prices increased. The introduction of the Ford Mustang in 1964 should have woken up the British sports car industry in much the same way that the Volkswagen Beetle became the flavor of month in the same year pushing out what was left of the British small family car market with the exception of the Mini. The original Mustang was a superb example of what the American car owner wanted. Reliable, sporty in design and featuring a mid size power unit with a modern gearbox. A few comforts but not too many and a choice of soft top or GT style. Now add an attractive price with a national distribution and service operation where spares were always available. Keep this design policy for a few years and you could push all the European imports into the sea, well almost all!

But Detroit could not get out of the 1950's desire for size as illustrated by the Corvette that should have been a world winner but not with a 300 horse power engine! The Bigger is Better policy and will increase sales seemed to be the general marketing attitude from Detroit. Just how wrong can anyone be? The Datsun Z series presented more of a threat to what remained of the British market but they were more expensive and just as prone to rust and decay as any British product.

The merger of BMC and Leyland Triumph also helped to strengthen the British position and gave them a second chance in the world's export market even though this new creation was still fighting to get their balance sheet in the black. Leyland did manage to achieve some degree of centralization with the Mini now being produced in one central plant and the successful MGB in another. Parts supply was also centralized and there was even a Leyland design team that worked in cooperation with their colleagues in other production plants. The Triumph Spitfire had taken off and was gaining its own market share while the Triumph 2000 sedan had a waiting list. So, despite a poor return on investment things seemed to have come together for this new collection of odd bedfellows now named British Leyland. US sales started to increase and new service facilities/dealerships were being established. 1972/73 returned to being growth years for US development and the 1973 Board report from Leyland was full of upbeat news on all fronts. Then the bombshell hit the import market when the US Government introduced rigid new standards for car exhaust emissions and car safety. Some say this was a direct ploy on the part of the US Government to curb imports especially from Japan who were gaining a strong market share by the mid 1970s. It certainly hit the British imports and many forecast that this was the end for British export to the new world. The type of investment required to meet these standards was extensive and the British government said a firm "No" to any request for further assistance. As to be expected, sales decreased as makeshift modifications were made to existing models like the ugly large rubber bumpers fitted to the MG range to meet American crash requirements and the air pollution equipment fitted to the small engines of the British sports cars that reduced performance and gas economy. The Japanese seemed to take these regulations in their stride with major investment in their growing car industry and good promotion techniques that gave them an excellent network of dealerships in a matter of a few years. Something the British had never achieved despite being the first on the block with a twenty-year head start.

In one last bid to save the British export sports car market the combined design teams put forward a completely new concept based on the wedge principle of aero dynamic design. All work design in every other production plant was put on hold including the now tired MGB that had been around for almost 18 years and desperately needed a complete overhaul. In the fall of 1976 the Triumph TR7 was launched in a fanfare of publicity both sides of the Atlantic. It was almost as bad as the famous Edsel disaster except that British Leyland did not have the Ford reserves to overcome the situation. In desperation with the hope that they could get future MG owners to move over to this new crea-

tion they closed the MG plant in 1980, almost a scared shrine to millions of MG owners throughout the world. They did this despite the fact that the old tired and now under powered MGB sold a record 34,794 cars that same year, a figure that the TR7 never got close too throughout its five year existence. This action also lost them what was left of the export market for British sports cars.

The Mazda RX7 and the revamped Datsun Z range soon filled the gap left by MG and the Triumph Spitfire, the once mighty British motor industry was now dead even though the corpse would not lie down. Export virtually vanished apart from the Rollers and a revamped Jaguar now under private ownership and almost back to its original quality level. The recession in 1979/80 coupled by the increasing value of the British pound against the US dollar helped to create this sad situation.

Every Leyland sports car sold in the USA during that period lost about a \$100.

The Triumph TR7 lost three times that much during its short lifetime. What was wrong with this car? Well I could say everything but that's not quite fair. It was ahead of its time but in step with previous vehicles had poor quality control. Now add the fact that it had serious electrical problems that took months to sort out. Had the car been fully tested for about two years as was the normal procedure for any new vehicle and had some serious market research been carried out to see what the next generation of sports car owners wanted it might have been a success, but I guess you could say the same thing about the Yugo!

What is left of the British Motor industry is not even a shadow of the former glory. Vauxhall the GM British company who have made cars in the UK for over 75 years are relocating to Europe and Ford UK already has. The independent Morgan Sports Car Company produces about twelve cars a week and has a two-year waiting list.

Jaguar is now a part of Ford who seems to have done a first class job with this marquee. The famous Mini is now in the capable hands of BMW who look like they have another winner on their hands with an international waiting list for this car. MG seems to have risen from the ashes once again and is now being produced in China, how successful this may turn out to be is still an open question. Will a new MG ever grace the highways of the US is a doubtful wish. And why should it? If they make a thousand cars a week in China it will take twenty years to meet the demand in that country.

Britain had such a wonderful opportunity to develop a world market for quality goods, the world was truly their oyster in 1947. During these post war years Britain developed the first Jet airliner, the De Havilland Comet, and held the world speed record for over a dec-

ade both on land and water, but corporate greed, poor management, reactionary unions and government interference managed to kill the goose that could have continued to lay the golden egg. The lesson is simple, keep free of government handouts, they will come back to haunt you. Change management often, especially on the design and marketing side. Watch the competition every day and never take the market for granted. Create good labor relations but don't allow your company to be held ransom by rogue unions and wild cat strikes. Remember, Big is not always Better. The idea of creating groups of companies under one umbrella without any real power to change policy or worse still being unwilling to make any changes is a sure road to the poor house. There is a lesson to be learned from the demise of the British Motor Industry by our friends in Detroit, but as is often the case we seldom look at history when planning the future.



Ten Things You Will Never Hear An MGA Owner Say

Reprinted from *The MG Experience*

www.mgexperience.net

by Bill Eastman

- # 10 - Well, the A failed emissions again.
- # 9 - Roll up the window, dear, I am getting a draft.
- # 8 - Don't worry, it won't leak on your new driveway.
- # 7 - My first gear syncro is weak.
- # 6 - Do you think the backfire could be caused by a bad gulp valve?
- # 5 - The defroster should melt that ice in a minute or two.
- # 4 - First one to the next stop light gets the pink slip.
- # 3 - So what if it's raining, we'll stay dry.
- # 2 - No problem, just throw it in the trunk.
- And the #1 thing you will never hear an MGA owner say...**
- # 1 - Lets take the freeway, I just hate those twisty back roads.

Activities Highlights

by Tad Carter

Britain on the Green – Sunday, April 26th

Come celebrate the start of the driving season at the 12th annual *Britain on the Green*. With nearly 200 British cars registered in 2008, the Capital Triumph Register is planning for another big event for 2009. *Britain of the Green* will be on the grounds of the Collingwood Library in Alexandria, VA. See the event link at <http://capitaltriumphregister.com>

British Car Week – May 30 – June 7, 2009

www.BritishCarWeek.org

For those wishing to join in British Car Week, please post the event logo on your car. For those driving on antique vehicle plates, this may qualify as proof of participation in “an antique car club activity, exhibit, tour, parade or similar event”, as required by law. Then again, it may not...

Hilton Head Island, SC – October 30 – November 1, 2009 Four Events – One Destination

www.hhiconcours.com

Hilton Head/Savannah Historics

Friday and Saturday, October 30 and 31, hosted at the newly reopened Hutchinson Island track, this two-day vintage track event offers everything for the avid performance car fan including vintage racing, autocross courses and hot lap rides at racing speeds in the latest and greatest sports car models

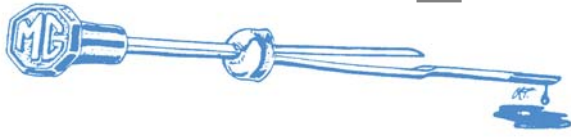
Car Club Jamboree

Saturday, October 31st, with participating car clubs from throughout the US and more than 150 cars on the field, the Car Club Jamboree is an eclectic mix of covering the history of the automobile, from modern day's high performance muscle cars and hot rods to 19th Century classics. 2009 will feature clubs that showcase British engineering such as Jaguar, Aston Martin, Austin Healey, Rolls-Royce and MG.

Concours d'Elegance

Sunday, November 1st, official Concours d'Elegance competition day, will feature 150 vintage cars competing for various awards. Selected as the 2009 Honored Marque, the Concours will celebrate the majestic history of Mercedes-Benz. 2008 top honors were presented to a 1928 Packard 4-43 Phaeton owned by Gordon Logan (Georgetown, TX) winning both Best of Show and Most-Outstanding Pre 1945 Car.

The Dipstick



The Tidewater MG Classics

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Affiliated with



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FIRST CLASS

Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, April 7th
Ron and Anita (Edwards-)
Struewing
5483 Doon St
Virginia Beach
479-0084

7:30-8:00pm - Kick Tyres
8:00 - Meeting